

Sue Renshell – AVDC Winslow District Councillor report – 19th April 2016

Over the past six years AVDC has saved around £14 million, whilst losing 60% of the government grant. This has been achieved not only through efficiencies but through creating new income streams. Leaving the old model behind, we have become a commercial organisation, working to provide the services our customers want.

For example:

Aylesbury Vale Broadband. AVDC have used some of the New Homes Bonus to create their own broadband company to target areas with poor coverage in the Vale area. While residents benefit from improved internet access – it also generates a valuable return for the council.

While on the subject of the internet, I'd also mention that AVDC were the first council in the country to move all our IT to Amazon's Web Cloud. This allows the council to become IT infrastructure free, with significant savings in staffing and hardware, which in turn has freed AVDC from huge expenses relating to high cost software systems. This single strategy has driven massive organisational and service change, delivering a further estimated £6 million of savings over the past five years.

Other commercial ventures at AVDC include the formation of Limecart and IncGen. These brands will use local suppliers to provide home and garden services and products, as well as business services to residents and companies within the Vale.

In recent years the district has seen some of the fastest rates of housing growth in the country and over the next 20 years, under the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, is potentially set to grow by a further 31,000 homes (a 40% increase). Regarding applications, this has placed extreme demand on our planning team, given that the cost of processing these applications isn't covered by the government's statutory planning fees, and therefore AVDC took the decision to concentrate on reducing costs. As a consequence, our planning team now operates entirely within the statutory fee of £172, with no subsidy from the council tax payer.

AVDC now has a fully flexible car pool for staff in partnership with the national car chain – Enterprise. This has resulted in better planning of journeys and has enabled the council to supply a low emission fleet – saving the taxpayer £100,000 annually.

Last November AVDC became the first council to run an online community lottery, and at this moment AVDC are selling more than 1800 tickets a week and are on track to generate around £55,000 a year for good causes, with more than 100 organisations taking part. It started as an alternative income for good causes when less funding will be available in the future. I can recommend buying tickets – as I've already won £2!

AVDC has a new website which encourages residents to contact them direct and receives 60,000 visitors a month, enabling customers to make contact whenever they want to.

The Gateway, our offices in Aylesbury, have office space enabling companies like the NHS to rent them out, and our conference areas are continuing to be hired out which generated £150,000 in 2015.

Recently AVDC invested council resources to refurbish the Swan Pool in Buckingham and awarded the management contract to "Everyone Active" in 2013. This has taken what was previously a management subsidy to a net saving of £600,000 a year.